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Another Look at the L2 Motivational Self System of Polish Students Majoring in English: Insights from Interview Data

Abstract

One of the most recent theoretical developments when it comes to the role of motivation in second language learning is the theory of the L2 Motivational Self System (e.g., Dörnyei, 2005). It has been proposed in recognition of the fact that: (1) learning a foreign language does not only involve acquiring a new communicative code, but also affects the personality of an individual, (2) the difficulties involved in applying Gardner's (1985) concept of integrativeness to foreign language contexts, and (3) the mounting empirical evidence (e.g., Dörnyei & Csizér, 2002), demonstrating that key components of motivation, such as integrativeness, instrumentality, attitudes towards L2 speakers or manifestations of motivated learning behavior are intricately interrelated. As a result, the notion of integrativeness has been reinterpreted as the L2-specific aspect of an individual's ideal self and the motivational system is believed to comprise the following three dimensions: (a) ideal L2 self, which is related to the abilities and skills that learners envisage themselves possessing, which may trigger a desire to reduce the distance between their actual and ideal selves, (b) ought-to L2 self, which is connected with the attributes that the learners believe are important in the eyes of significant others, and (c) L2 learning experiences, which is a context-related factor reflecting the nature of the immediate learning environment and learning experiences. This framework was applied in a qualitative study, the participants of which were 28 English majors in the last year of a three-year BA program who were interviewed about their motives for learning the target language. The analysis revealed that although motivational influences which have traditionally been regarded as important do play a role, there are a number of factors, such as family influence, instrumentality, knowledge orientation or international posture, that are also of vital importance.

Keywords: motivation; theory of L2 Motivational Self System, ideal L2 self, ought-to self, English majors

Preliminary Considerations

Research into motivation to learn second or foreign languages has never lost its popularity since the publication of Gardner and Lambert's (1972) seminal study which provided evidence that learners, at least those in second language contexts having ample opportunities for contacts with native speakers, are driven by integrative or instrumental motives, with the former superseding the latter. This should hardly come as a surprise in view of the fact that, to quote Dörnyei (2005, pp. 65–67), motivation “provides the primary impetus to initiate L2 learning and later the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process; indeed, all the other factors involved in SLA presuppose motivation to some extent.” In effect, following new theoretical developments, second language (L2) learning motivation research has gone through different phases over the last several decades, moving from the social psychological period, dominated by Gardner's (1985) theory, through the cognitive-situated period, underpinned by motivational theories proposed within the field of educational psychology, such as attribution theory (Weiner, 1992) or self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), and also emphasizing the need to explore motivation in specific contexts, to the process-oriented period, where the main focus has been on exploring temporal variation in learners' motives and intensity of their engagement in the learning task (cf. Dörnyei, 2005; Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). Most of the current research is representative of the latter phase and a process-oriented perspective is very likely to continue to shape research into L2 motivation in the years to come. This, however, should by no means be interpreted as indicating that empirical studies striving to offer insights into learners' motivation at a particular point in time are no longer viable and should be abandoned.

Perhaps the most prominent and influential theoretical position that has emerged within the process-oriented approach to the study of L2 motivation is the theory of L2 Motivational Self System that has been put forward by Dörnyei (2005, 2009a, 2014) with a view to bringing the concept of integrativeness closer to the realities of foreign language contexts in which, despite increasing opportunities for foreign travel or technological advances, access to the TL still often remains extremely scarce. Drawing on the concept of possible selves and future self guides stemming from personality psychology (Markus & Nurius, 1986), conceptualizations of motivation proposed by Noels (2003) and Ushioda (2001), as well as his own research findings (e.g., Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005; Dörnyei & Csizér, 2002), he describes the construct of second language learning motivation in terms of three dimensions, namely: (1) *ideal L2 self*, which is related to the vision of themselves as target language (TL) users that learners hold, (2) *ought-to L2 self*, which concerns the need to

live up to the expectations of significant others, often to ward off unfavorable consequences, and (3) *L2 learning experience*, which pertains in the main to the nature of the environment in which learning takes place. As Ushioda and Dörnyei (2014, p. 400) explain, the key tenet on which the theory is predicated “is that if proficiency in the target language is integral to one’s *ideal* or *ought-to* self, this will serve as a powerful motivator to learn the language because of our psychological desire to reduce the discrepancy between current and future self states” (emphasis original). On the one hand, in line with the claims of the process-oriented paradigm, the three components are assumed to be in a state of constant flux as possible selves can be revised upwards or downwards in response to evidence of progress being made, or modified as a result of interaction with other self-concepts (cf. Henry, 2015). On the other hand, the adoption of this theoretical stance allows the analysis of L2 motivational self systems at a given point in time, thereby offering a snapshot of the intensity and structure of motivation to study the TL in a specific group of learners (see many of the chapters included in Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009; Csizér & Magid, 2014). It is the latter interpretation that provided the rationale for the study reported in this paper which sought to explore the intensity and nature of the motives underlying English majors’ efforts to learn the TL. In the first part, a brief overview of selected studies adopting the ideal L2 self perceptive will be presented, and, in the second, the aims, design, and findings of the research project will be discussed, which will then offer a basis for a consideration of future research directions and pedagogical implications in the conclusion to the paper.¹

Review of Previous Studies into L2 Motivational Self System

Since the number of studies adopting L2 Motivational Self System as the theoretical framework has grown exponentially in recent years, not least because this framework has to some extent assumed the status of a default one in exploring motivational dynamics, a detailed overview of such empirical investigations falls outside the scope of the present paper. In addition, the bulk of this research has been quantitative in nature, seeking, first, to validate the model and explore its facets in different contexts (e.g., Ryan, 2009; Taguchi, Magid, & Papi, 2009; Yashima, 2009), and, second, to shed light on the links between its different components, learners’ attainment (e.g., Lamb, 2012) and

¹ The author would like to express his gratitude to his colleagues, Dr. Anna Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Dr. Jakub Bielak, for their considerable assistance in collecting and analyzing the data employed for the purpose of the present study.

a number of attributes believed to mediate the success of L2 learning, such as autonomy (e.g., Csizér & Kormas, 2014), anxiety and self-efficacy (e.g., Piniel & Csizér, 2015). However, in view of the fact that the research project reported below was qualitative in nature, the focus of the present section will be on a succinct description of several representative studies embodying this research paradigm with the purpose of illustrating the methodological choices made and the nature of insights that empirical investigations of this kind can be expected to yield.

One qualitative study which embraced the ideal L2 self perspective was the longitudinal empirical investigation undertaken by Lamb (2009), in which this theoretical stance was combined with situated learning theory (Wenger, 1998) and social theory (Bourdieu, 1991). The aim was to explore over the period of two years the motivational trajectories of two Indonesian learners who manifested what Higgins (1996) has termed a promotion and prevention regulatory focus in learning English, thus epitomizing to some extent ideal and ought-to L2 selves. The analysis of the data collected in the course of a series of interviews demonstrated that the two constructs can indeed be useful in accounting for differences in approaching the research situation, opportunities for self-regulated learning or classroom experiences. More recent research has attempted to apply L2 motivational system to the study of individual difference variables, as evident in the studies carried out by Miyahara (2014) and Yue (2014). The former, yet again bringing together the concept of the ideal L2 self, situated learning and imagined communities, focused upon the emotions exhibited by six Japanese learners in the first year of a two-year English curriculum. The data collected by means of a series of interviews, conducted over the period of about a year and complemented by the participants' regular reflections and e-mail exchanges during the six-week study abroad component of the program, were subjected to a combination of thematic and structural analysis which allowed identification of two distinct patterns for the formation of the ideal L2 selves and the contribution of emotions to this process. The latter was a case study of a Chinese university student learning English and zoomed in on the role that the discrepancy between learners' self-concept and their possible selves might play in triggering willingness to communicate in a second language (MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1998). Thematic analysis of the data obtained from a life story interview, classroom observation, and stimulated recall sessions led the author to conclude that "the learner's L2 WTC is more likely to be initiated in the L2 communicative situation when the language learner can visualize specific L2 possible selves and realize that the discrepancy between the current self and future possible selves is possible to be reduced by following specific feasible L2 action plans." Magid (2014), in turn, conducted an intervention study in which 31 Chinese students enrolled in a variety of courses at a British university had the benefit of a training

program, based on the use of scripted imagery, which was aimed at enhancing their vision of ideal L2 selves as well as honing abilities indispensable for the attainment of this vision, such as setting clearly-defined goals and devising realistic action plans. One of the measures of success were interviews held at the beginning and at the end of the program, which demonstrated that the vision of the participants' ideal L2 selves can be considerably enhanced, indicating that the application of imagery can be harnessed as a useful motivational strategy. Particularly interesting is the study undertaken by Waninge (2015), who applied a dynamic systems perspective to investigating the changing nature of L2 learning experience, which is the least known component of the motivational self system, approaching it in terms of affective-cognitive-motivational conglomerates (Dörnyei, 2009b) and identifying four recurring attractor states in the language classroom, that is engagement, interest, anxiety, and boredom. The data collected during semi-structured interviews showed, among others, that interest can indeed be affected by a combination of cognitive, motivational, affective, and contextual factors, a finding that testified to the validity of the adopted theoretical framework. Finally, Lyons (2014) set out to explore the evolution of the L2 self-concept of 39 Korean students who had chosen English-related majors over the period of six months. The data gathered through four interviews, one focus group and three follow-up individual ones, enabled the identification of a number of influences on the development of L2 self-concept, such as the ability to come up with a more tangible vision of a future possible self, to monitor the progress being made towards future self-guides, and to attribute successes and failures to the magnitude of one's own commitment. The study reported in the following section contributes to this line of inquiry by providing valuable insights into the motivated learning behavior of Polish students majoring in English and the factors that conspire to create their specific motivational profiles.

The Study

Rationale, Aims, and Research Questions

As emphasized by Pawlak (2016), present-day Polish students majoring in English constitute a very different group from those of, say, a decade or two decades ago. This can be attributed, among others, to the fact that being admitted into English Departments is much easier now than it used to be, the accompanying lower levels of proficiency of the candidates and lower levels of ultimate attainment, as well as the growing perception of such programs as

intensive courses in English rather than opportunities to become acquainted with issues in linguistics, literature, culture or foreign language methodology. Consequently, it is fully warranted to conduct studies that shed light on the motives that drive English majors in their efforts to improve their mastery of the target language, not least because it can help administrators, program coordinators and university teachers to better adjust instructional content and activities to students' needs without having to sacrifice too much of what is universally considered the core of BA and MA programs in English philology. After all, most of those involved in running such programs or teaching the multitude of subjects they comprise would undoubtedly attest that their aims should be much more ambitious than just giving students an opportunity to gain greater control over TL skills and subsystems with a view to developing superior communicative abilities.

It was such a rationale that prompted Pawlak (2016) to conduct a questionnaire study of 220 Polish BA students majoring in English, which was aimed to examine the level and structure of their motivation to learn English and adopted as the analytical framework the theory of L2 motivational self system (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009). The main findings were that the motivation of the participants was quite strong and that they were in the main driven by such motives as a positive vision of themselves as highly advanced users of the TL at some time in the future, their interest in and fascination with the English language as such, their positive predisposition to the way in which English classes are conducted and their respect for and also to some extent at least, their willingness to get familiarized with other cultures and ways of life. On the other hand, although differences were revealed for the specific items included in the subscales, the contribution of instrumental motives, international vocation or activities, or the encouragement from parents and significant others proved to be of much smaller significance, with such factors as the perceived threat that the TL posed to the mother tongue or anxiety exhibited in classroom and real-world situations exerting a clearly negative influence. The study reported in the present paper can be regarded as a follow-up to this initial research project in that it was also intended to provide insights into English majors' motives for learning the TL from the perspective of the theory of the ideal second language self. The crucial difference, however, lay in the fact that it drew upon qualitative data, thus allowing more in-depth analysis of the nature of participants' motivation and at the same time rectifying some of the flaws singled out in the above-mentioned study. Nevertheless, the research questions addressed were identical and they were as follows:

1. What is the participants' overall level of motivation to learn English?
2. Which of the factors believed to comprise the L2 ideal self-system contribute the most to shaping the participants' motivation?

Participants

The participants were 28 English majors in the last year of a three-year BA program, all of whom had also taken part in the previous study undertaken by Pawlak (2016) and had volunteered to be included in the present empirical investigation. They were on average 22 years of age and at the time of data collection they had been learning English for an average of 12.5 years, typically having started formal instruction in elementary school. Their English proficiency oscillated between B2 and C1 in terms of the levels specified in the *Common European Framework*, but it should be emphasized that there was considerable individual variation in this respect among the participants, both in general and with reference to different TL skills and subsystems. Similarly to other BA programs in English across Poland, the students had the benefit of an intensive course in the target language which required them to attend separate classes dedicated to pronunciation, grammar, speaking, writing, and integrated skills, with the foci being shifted somewhat in each of the three years, as well as to obtain credits in a number of content classes in issues in language acquisition and use, linguistics, literature, history, culture, and foreign language pedagogy, most of which were taught in English. It should also be noted that in the second part of the last year in the program, the period during which the data were collected, the students were predominantly concerned with working on their diploma papers, the completion of which was the necessary condition for being allowed to take the diploma exam and obtaining the BA degree.

Data Collection and Analysis

The requisite data were collected by means of individual, semi-structured interviews that were conducted outside of regular class time and lasted approximately 10 minutes. In each case, following one or two warm-up questions, the participants were requested to answer a number of queries related to different aspects of the L2 motivational self system which have often been tapped in research undertaken within this framework, mirroring to a great extent issues tackled by the subscales included in the tool employed by Pawlak (2016). The facets under investigation were as follows: *motivated learning behavior* (i.e., effort and persistence in L2 learning), *ideal L2 self* (i.e., learners' perceptions of themselves as successful users of English), *ought-to L2 self* (i.e., the impact of significant others), *family influence* (i.e., the parents' role in motivating students to learn English), *L2 learning experience* (i.e., the extent to which learners enjoy the process of learning inside and outside the classroom), *instrumentality* (i.e., the significance of pragmatic gains), *knowledge orientation* (i.e., learners' desire to expand their knowledge about the world), *international posture* (i.e., students'

readiness to engage in communication with foreigners in a variety of contexts), *self-confidence* (i.e., the degree to which anxiety is likely to be manifested in different situations requiring TL use), and *fear of assimilation* (i.e., concerns about the impact of the TL on the mother tongue and the culture it represents). The specific questions that were directed at the students with the purpose of shedding light on these facets touched on such issues as the prospect of getting a job abroad, the use of English in professional and personal lives, the envisaged purposes of using English in the future, aspirations regarding the ultimate levels of attainment, the role of parents in the participants' learning of English, the relationship between English and its culture, the extent of the students' involvement in learning the TL, the importance of grades as a motivating factor, the amount of anxiety involved in using English in various situations, the threat that the TL posed to the mother tongue, the culture it represents and national identity, the attitude towards English as a foreign language, as well as the participants' approach to the study of English. The students were given a choice as to the language in which they preferred to be interviewed, but all of them either chose their mother tongue from the very start or switched to Polish when answering some of the questions. The data gathered in this way were audio-recorded, transcribed, and subjected to qualitative analysis which consisted in identifying recurring patterns, taking as a point of reference the aspects of the L2 motivational self system mentioned above.

Findings and Discussion

At the very outset of this section, two important comments are in order: first, for the sake of clarity, the findings of the study will be presented in the same order in which the different facets of L2 motivational self system were listed in the preceding section, and, second, in light of the nature of the data, a decision has been made to combine the presentation of the results with the discussion thereof, mainly adopting as yardstick the results of the study conducted by Pawlak (2016) which targeted a similar, albeit larger, group of participants.

When it comes to motivated learning behavior, it turned out that the students were indeed willing to invest a lot of effort in learning English, which is evident in the fact that, when asked to evaluate their commitment, determination, and involvement in this respect on a scale from 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest), the vast majority opted for nine, a value that can be regarded as highly positive. This finding is consistent with the outcome reported by Pawlak (2016) and testifies to quite strong motivation on the part of the English majors, which should perhaps not come as a surprise given the high standards that have to be met to successfully complete the BA program, not only in terms of achieving the required level of TL proficiency but also mastering the demanding content

for which ample mastery of English is clearly indispensable. What has to be borne in mind though is that the participants were volunteers who might be inherently more motivated than their peers, and that their reported commitment and effort might be underpinned by rather disparate motives which will be considered in some detail below. The analysis of the responses also revealed that the interviewees were on the whole experienced language learners, quite aware of their strengths and weaknesses, they were able to successfully employ a wide array of language learning strategies and they manifested a high degree of autonomy, as visible, for example, in their capacity for detecting TL areas that posed problems but also for seeking out effective solutions to the difficulties they encountered. The following excerpts illustrate some of these points.²

- (1) I am very involved in learning English. After classes at the university I teach children and I give private lessons. That is why in my free time I read books for pleasure or watch movies without subtitles. I am trying to improve my English all the time.
- (2) I prefer to learn on my own because in a group there is always someone who is distracting me. I like to learn vocabulary, phrasal verbs or idioms. I like to visualize what I am learning or to use different kinds of associations.
- (3) I am doing my best to improve my English. I have made friends with people from the USA and other countries to have more practice opportunities. This allows me to practice my pronunciation and to find out a lot of things about culture.
- (4) I am an introvert so I like to learn on my own but sometimes it is useful to exchange observations with someone else. I have always liked to learn practical things. I know that pronunciation is important but it is difficult to master. Grammar is even more difficult.

Moving on to the ideal L2 self, most of the participants stated that they saw themselves in the future as highly proficient users of English in different situations, often making references to the *Common European Framework* and describing their envisioned level as C1 or C2. While they were at the same time fully cognizant that attaining superior mastery of the TL, let alone approximating the kind of communicative competence that is manifested by native speakers, is in all likelihood an unachievable goal, they were still determined to pursue it as this endeavor was surely a worthwhile undertaking. Another component of their imagined selves was related to their professional lives since most of them envisioned themselves as having careers in which they would use

² The participants' responses cited throughout the paper have been translated from Polish into English by the present author.

English on a daily basis as teachers, translators, interpreters, or employees of international companies in which the use of English is the norm rather than an exception. What should be noted, however, is that the responses frequently reflected very different agendas, both with respect to the mastery of specific skills of aspirations for the future. These trends are also in line with the findings reported by Pawlak (2016) and they are illustrated in the following comments which appeared in the course of the interviews:

- (5) I would very much like to achieve the C2 level and I am confident that I can do it if I apply myself.
- (6) I am considering working as a teacher but also getting a job requiring the use of English. If I become a teacher, I will pass on my knowledge to others, and if I work for some company or find some other job connected with English, this will probably involve translating and interpreting.
- (7) At the moment I am seriously contemplating becoming a teacher because I got to like this job after my teaching practice and this is what I would very much like to do. I would like to achieve as high a level of proficiency as possible but I am aware that my speaking skills will always lag behind writing or grammar.
- (8) Yes, I would like to translate books and perhaps movies, and maybe promote our culture abroad. I think that I will be able to achieve a level of proficiency which will enable me to communicate with foreigners. There may be a discrepancy between my command of speaking and writing as I would probably be better in speaking.

Perhaps as a corollary of the nature of the questions posed, the ought-to self was mainly associated with the impact of evaluation on the motivation to learn English. As transpires from the analysis, the students tended to agree that grades played a significant role in encouraging them to study hard, both those they were given on regular achievement tests in different courses, and in particular those they received on their final examinations since they determined whether or not they completed a particular level in the program. Some of them also indicated that grades helped them identify the areas that were in need of improvement, which resulted in decisions about the focus of their future efforts. On the other hand, the participants expressed the opinion that grades often failed to reflect their real skills and abilities, either because the format of the tests precluded them from demonstrating their mastery of the target language, a situation which is suggestive of inadequate face validity of the assessment measures used, or because the stress they experienced caused them to underperform. These were, in their view, the main reasons for the blatant lack of correspondence between semester grades, which derived from their day-to-day

performance in a particular course, and the grades received on examinations administered at the end of the academic year. Relevant excerpts follow:

- (9) Grades are important to me as they show what I still have to improve.
- (10) Grades influence motivation because, apart from causing irritation and frustration, they bring about motivation to work harder and learn more intensively.
- (11) Grades often do not reflect out true abilities. There is also stress and difficulty in coming up with ideas.
- (12) Grades in practical English often do not give justice to what we know since sometimes there is a problem with a particular topic. Besides, not everyone is so concerned with grammar, but they want to speak. For others, grammar is more important and they know it well but they find it hard to communicate. So the grade gives you an idea about a specific area but not the whole mastery.

Somewhat in contrast to the findings reported by Pawlak (2016), family influence proved to be an important factor in affecting the participants' motivation to learn English, particularly with respect to parental encouragement. As is evident from the students' responses during the interviews, it was in most cases their parents who could be credited with starting their adventure with English, for example by arranging and funding private tutoring, offered constant support throughout process, and, in some cases influenced the students' decisions to choose English as their major at the university. There were also some instances, though, when parents were skeptical about the choice of English studies, mainly out of concern about the prospects of securing a job as a teacher, but this did not dissuade students from pursuing this course of study, a decision that was later not contested. The following excerpts illustrate some of these points:

- (13) My father motivated me since I was a child and my mother enrolled me in my first language course. They have always been supportive and happy with my successes. In fact, it was my mother who encouraged me to study here.
- (14) My parents sent me to English lessons when I was very young. They have supported me all the time, financially as well, and I have always felt their encouragement. They believe it is a good thing that I am studying English. They approve of whatever I do if they can see I enjoy it. It is a family tradition because my mom is a teacher and my grandma used to teach French.
- (15) My parents do not interfere with my life and they can see that I am studying what I really want. My mother has doubts about English because there are so many teachers around and she is afraid that I might

not get a job in the future. But she knows that this is what I want to do and she respects my decision.

As was the case in the much larger sample investigated by Pawlak (2016), the analysis of the interview responses also indicated that the experience of learning English played a positive role in enhancing the participants' motivation. For one thing, such sentiments stemmed from the favorable attitude to English as a foreign language as such since many students confessed that they simply liked the sound of English and were positively predisposed to achieving high levels of proficiency in that language. What should also be emphasized is that the interviewees opted for British or American English as the model they would like to aspire to, expressing little appreciation for international English due to its perceived violation of the TL norms. Secondly, despite some voices of dissent, the participants were on the whole contented with the kind of instruction that was offered in the program, in most cases heaping praise on their teachers and the instructional practices they routinely employed. Such sentiments are visible in the following comments:

- (16) The sound, I love the British accent, it is so beautiful ... in songs and in programs and films. I just like listening to it.
- (17) I like the sounds of words and the opportunity to use phrases that do not exist in Polish. Idioms are also interesting.
- (18) What I particularly enjoy about my classes is group work which is often used by some teachers and they also use tasks planned in such a way that I can exchange my opinions with my peers, in particular with respect to texts that describe different walks of life. I have to admit though that I do not like some aspects of grammar such as syntax.

With respect to instrumental motives, they turned out to be of much more significance than in the case of the study conducted by Pawlak (2016), but the focus on professional issues was similar. In fact, all of the students seemed to be driven by instrumental goals that were primarily related to enhancing the chances of getting a good job in the future, such that would, on the one hand, be satisfying and, on the other, at the very least secure, if not well-paid. While the majority of the participants were unanimous in the conviction that they would like to be teachers of English, with some of them even specifying the age group they would like to work with, a few others were adamant in the claim that they would never join the teaching profession, making it plain that they were planning to get other qualifications and that they just perceived a good command of English as an asset which they will take advantage of in their professional lives. Sentiments of this kind are exemplified in the following excerpts:

- (19) I hope to become a respected teacher who can use English similarly to native speakers.
- (20) I am very much aware of the problems with jobs for teachers but I hope there will be some opportunity for me. I cannot imagine myself doing something else. I just want to teach kids.
- (21) My dream is working for an international company. I would be happy to work in film production or something like that. I would definitely not like to be a teacher. This job is too hard.
- (22) I do not know exactly what I will be doing but it will be connected with English for sure.

As regards international posture and knowledge orientation, facets that are very closely related to each other, the students were quite willing to communicate with foreigners in various situations, thanks to which they were more likely to expand their knowledge about the world. This, however, was not in most instances tantamount to expressing a willingness to immigrate, but, rather, indicative of their readiness to spend some time in an English-speaking country with a view to gaining greater mastery of the target language. At the same time, however, some of the students did not exclude the possibility of staying abroad permanently, particularly when a propitious opportunity arose. Additionally, most of the participants stated that they wanted to get familiarized with the American or British culture before visiting the relevant countries as this would facilitate communication with the native speakers but there were also such who were convinced that the knowledge of culture was irrelevant when international contacts with people coming from a variety of different countries were the goal. The following comments illustrate some of these trends:

- (23) I might go abroad for a couple of years but not permanently. The main goal would be to improve my English, to make it more natural. I could also get some qualifications. When we collect enough money, we will go to see the States... as tourists, not to work there. But if I get an interesting offer, who knows? I know I might have to go abroad because there are hardly any prospects for young people here.
- (24) I thought that after I graduate I might go abroad for a year to improve my English and then come back. I could find a job there although I do not know what job this would be, but this would have to be in Great Britain. However, I would like to have contact with native speakers because you are usually surrounded by Poles.
- (25) I am surely considering immigration although I would like to avoid such a situation. Still, such a thought crosses your mind from time to time.

As regards self-confidence in using English and the effect of anxiety in this respect, the results mirrored to a large extent those reported by Pawlak (2016), with the caveat that feelings of self-efficacy, self-confidence or apprehension were a function of the situation in which TL use was expected to occur. This is evident in the fact that whereas some participants regarded interaction with native speakers as extremely stress-inducing, pointing to the danger that they will be able to pin down all the errors and inconsistencies, others were much less apprehensive of such a prospect, arguing that native speakers will point out what is wrong, correct their errors and be able to better understand the sources of their linguistic problems. Similar ambivalence was voiced with respect to the instructional setting since, according to the students, some tasks, activities or exam circumstances were inherently more likely to generate anxiety than others, with much hinging on the attitude of the teacher or peers. The following excerpts are illustrative of such sentiments:

- (26) Native speakers are OK as they concentrate on the message and we are good enough to express the intended meaning. By contrast, non-natives, particularly my teachers, will be more focused on errors and are likely to notice tiniest problems. I am also afraid that the students in my group will laugh at me and I get very anxious during oral exams.
- (27) I feel stressed out when I use English in the presence of native speakers because they are better than me and they can notice the errors I make. But when I talk to someone who is not a native speaker, this is not a problem and I am not anxious because I know that I will be understood and my errors will go unnoticed.
- (28) Stress? This depends on the members of the examination board. When I was taking my make-up exam, there was no anxiety at all. It was like a conversation with old friends.

The analysis of the data demonstrated that the participants were not afraid of the negative impact of English on their mother tongue, their identity and way of life, a finding that stands in contrast to the results of Pawlak's (2016) study. In fact, some of them expressed satisfaction with the omnipresence of English, hoping that adopting some elements of the TL culture could trigger changes in the Polish ways of life which clearly failed to live up to their expectations. Others saw the impact of English as a natural phenomenon that should not be labeled as good or bad, but which could in fact allow foreigners to become familiarized with the Polish culture. Others yet were reluctant to favor one style of life over another, stating that this is a distinctive feature of a particular society that should simply be respected or even held in high esteem. Representative excerpts from the interviews are the following:

- (29) There are many borrowings and English words are used by the young every day but it is not a real danger. Perhaps, thanks to English people from abroad will learn more about the Polish culture.
- (30) The Polish way of life is different but not better or worse than others, just different. Each nationality has its own way of dealing with problems.
- (31) People there are more relaxed and friendly, more optimistic. We are very serious, we do not smile very often.
- (32) The English way of life is perhaps not better but if I were to choose, I would rather pursue the American rather than Polish dream. A typical Pole will always complain. We surely have reasons to complain but the American way of life is more appealing to me.

Conclusions and Implications

As can be seen from the foregoing discussion, the results of this qualitative study are to a large extent consistent with the findings of the quantitative research project undertaken by Pawlak (2016) with a similar, but much more sizable, group of participants. In particular, it turned out, somewhat contrary to the claims of those lamenting the falling standards of English studies and the lack of commitment on the part of students in foreign language departments, that the English majors were quite strongly motivated to study the TL and to invest considerable time and effort in the task. The most important motives underlying their involvement included a clear vision of themselves as proficient language users in different walks of life, favorable attitudes to the target language and the ways in which it was taught in the program, as well as readiness to get to know other cultures and ways of life. Surprisingly, to some extent in contrast to the findings of the previous study, external influences in the form of evaluation and parental encouragement or tangible support turned out to play a much greater part in affecting their motivation whereas anxiety and fear of assimilation proved to be much less detrimental in this respect, with their perceived influence hinging upon a specific situation. Despite such overall positive findings, there is still a clear need to aid learners in creating vivid but also realistic visions of themselves as TL users, assist them in coming up with feasible plans that would enable them to accomplish their imagined goals and convince them to attribute their successes and failures to their own efforts rather than forces outside their control. It also appears warranted to provide students with some form of intercultural training, properly tailored to their needs, with a view to making them more sensitive to other cultures, customs and ways of

life, and take steps intended to boost their self-confidence and self-efficacy, at the same time reducing the anxiety they might be paralyzed by when communicating in English. Obviously, before such practices are implemented, further research is indispensable that would, first, corroborate the underlying structure of English majors' L2 motivational self system in similar contexts, and, second, pinpoint the most effective ways in which such instructional goals can be attained. As the present author has elucidated elsewhere, the results of such studies are bound to provide important signposts for all of those involved in designing, implementing, and assessing BA and MA programs in English, both in Poland and other, similar educational contexts.

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Mirosław Pawlak

Noch ein Blick für Motivationssystem im Fremdsprachenunterricht von Anglistikstudenten. Befragungsschlüsse

Zusammenfassung

Der vorliegende Beitrag präsentiert Ergebnisse der empirischen Forschung über Motivation beim Fremdsprachenunterricht, die nach der im Jahre 2009 von Dörnyei entwickelten Motivationssystemtheorie in einer Fremdsprache durchgeführt wurde. Das System besteht aus drei Elementen, d.i.: dem idealen sprachlichen „Ich“, also der Vorstellung des Lernenden als eines künftigen Zielsprachenutzers; dem sprachlichen „Ich“, das den Erwartungen anderer für den Lernenden wichtigen Personen entspricht und meistens auch negative Folgen der unerfüllten Erwartungen widerspiegelt; den Erfahrungen im Fremdsprachenunterricht, die mit der Lernsituation eng verbunden sind. An der Forschung nahmen 28 Studenten der englischen Philologie teil, welche in teilweise strukturierten Interviews befragt die Fragen über verschiedene Aspekte der besagten Theorie beantworteten. Die Qualitätsanalyse hat eindeutig gezeigt, dass die Studenten zum Englischunterricht sehr motiviert sind. Die entscheidende Rolle spielen dabei: ihre Vorstellung von sich selbst als fortgeschrittenen Benutzern des Englischen für Berufszwecke, positive Einstellung zur englischen Sprache und zur Methode deren Erlernung und die Bereitschaft, andere Kulturen und Lebensweisen kennenzulernen. Wichtige Rolle spielt hier auch die Elternhilfe und erhaltene Zensuren, die jedoch die Fähigkeiten der Studenten nicht immer richtig widerspiegeln.